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Land Law Federalism

Ashira Pelman Ostrow

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LAND LAW FEDERALISM

Ashira Pelman Ostrow

ABSTRACT

Land exhibits a unique duality. Each parcel is at once absolutely fixed in location and inextricably linked to a complex array of interconnected systems, natural and man-made. Ecosystems spanning vast geographic areas sustain human life; interstate highways, railways, and airports physically connect remote areas; networks of buildings, homes, offices, and factories create communities and provide the physical context in which most human interaction takes place. Despite this duality, the dominant descriptive and normative account of land-use law is premised upon local control. In a world where capital and information pass freely across increasingly porous jurisdictional boundaries, few regulatory matters can be cabined within the borders of a single state, let alone a single locality. Thus, despite the mantra of localism, modern land-use law has evolved to incorporate a significant, though undertheorized, national dimension.

This Article develops a coherent national account of land-use law. First, this Article establishes a doctrinal basis and normative justification for federal land-use law, both of which derive from the cumulative effects of local land-use decisions on interstate commerce and the national welfare. Second, this Article develops a theoretical framework through which to analyze the substantial body of existing federal land law. Finally, the Article applies principles of federalism theory to outline a “local-official-as-federal-agent” model of land-use law that harnesses the relative regulatory capacities of each level of government.

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INTRODUCTION

It is hardly unique to describe land as unique. In one sense, land is unique because it is immobile; it is, by definition, local. Its value is specific to its owner and locational context—its geography, topography, current use, and relationship to surrounding uses and users. Yet the uniqueness of land derives not only from its “localness” but also from its “nationalness”—from the role that it plays in national networks. Each parcel is at once absolutely fixed in location and inextricably linked to a complex array of interconnected systems, natural and man-made. Ecosystems spanning vast geographic areas sustain human life; interstate highways, railways, and airports physically connect remote areas; telecommunications towers dotting the landscape facilitate increasingly sophisticated forms of communication; energy infrastructure crosses state and local boundaries to power the nation; and networks of buildings, homes, offices, and factories create communities and provide the physical context in which most human interaction takes place.

Despite the expansion of the federal government over the past century, local governments have retained primary authority to regulate the use of land.

1 See, e.g., RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF CONTRACTS § 360 cmt. e (1981) (“A specific tract of land has long been regarded as unique and impossible of duplication by the use of any amount of money.”).
Scholars and policy makers often reject the notion of an expanded federal role, even as they recognize that local zoning boards lack the capacity and the incentive to address complex problems, such as urban sprawl and affordable housing that are created by the cumulative impact of local land-use decisions. In a world where capital and information flow freely across national and subnational boundaries, few regulatory matters can be cabined within the jurisdictional lines of a single state, let alone a single locality.

In response, modern land-use law has evolved to incorporate a variety of national concerns. Federal laws that directly regulate or seek to influence land

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5 See, e.g., Bronin, supra note 4, at 262 (“No serious scholar supports an expanded role for the national government in traditional land use regulation . . . .”); Eric T. Freyfogle, The Particulars of Owning, 25 Ecology L.Q. 574, 580 (1999) (noting that “[l]and use regulation at the state level is bad enough” and that “[d]irect federal regulation, for many citizens, is simply taking things too far”); Kayden, supra note 4, at 451–53 (suggesting that the size of the United States, its private-property tradition, and citizen preference for local control cut against national involvement); Catherine J. LaCroix, Land Use and Climate Change: Is It Time for a National Land Use Policy?, 35 Ecology L. Currents 124, 124 (2008), http://elq.typepad.com/currents/pdf/currents35-16-lacroix-2008-1124.pdf (“It will never be time for an articulated federal land use policy; the tradition of local control of land use is simply too strong.”); Daniel B. Rodriguez, The Role of Legal Innovation in Ecosystem Management: Perspectives from American Local Government Law, 24 Ecology L.Q. 745, 751 (1997) (explaining why property owners and local governments resist centralization of land-use regulatory authority); Trisolini, supra note 4, at 740 (arguing that efforts to centralize regulation of land “would likely provoke fierce political opposition, as many consider this a core local function, central to local governments’ ability to maintain autonomy”).


7 See sources cited infra note 36.

8 Robert A. Schapiro, Federalism as Intersystemic Governance: Legitimacy in a Post-Westphalian World, 57 Emory L.J. 115, 120 (2007) (“In contemporary society, the dichotomy of ‘truly local’ and ‘truly national’ has no substance.”); see also Robert B. Abdieh, From Federalism to Intersystemic Governance: The Changing Nature of Modern Jurisdiction, 57 Emory L.J. 1, 17 (2007); Griffith, supra note 6, at 510–11.

use include federal permitting schemes under the Endangered Species Act\(^\text{10}\) (ESA) and the Clean Water Act\(^\text{11}\) (CWA), federal siting regimes under the Telecommunications Act\(^\text{12}\) (TCA) and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act\(^\text{13}\) (RLUIPA), and land-use planning requirements imposed in connection with federal housing and transportation funding. In addition, many other federal laws impact land use incidentally, as a byproduct of their main goals, including, for example, land-use decisions that must be made to achieve federally mandated emissions standards under the Clean Air Act and the CWA’s Stormwater Phase II Rule.\(^\text{14}\)

Thus, despite the mantra of localism, a significant body of federal land-use law, defined broadly to include federal policies that influence the development of privately owned land, already exists. In the absence of a national land-use policy, however, observers have typically studied each federal policy in isolation, describing an uncoordinated federal statutory “patchwork,”\(^\text{15}\) enacted “piecemeal”\(^\text{16}\) and resulting in inconsistent and sometimes self-defeating regulatory policies.\(^\text{17}\) In contrast to other substantive areas of law,\(^\text{18}\) including, for example, environmental law,\(^\text{19}\) the legal literature has yet to develop a

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\(^{14}\) 40 C.F.R. § 122.21–29 (2011); see also infra Part II.

\(^{15}\) Kayden, supra note 4, at 446.

\(^{16}\) U.S. GEN. ACCOUNTING OFFICE, B-280699, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: EXTENT OF FEDERAL INFLUENCE ON “URBAN SPRAWL” IS UNCLEAR 9 (1999); Randolph R. Lowell, Coastal Smart Growth, 22 PACE ENVTL. L. REV. 231, 237 (2005); Todd A. Wildermuth, National Land Use Planning in America, Briefly, 26 J. LAND RESOURCES & ENVTL. L. 73, 73 (2005).

\(^{17}\) Green, supra note 9, at 119; see also Robert L. Glicksman, Climate Change Adaptation: A Collective Action Perspective on Federalism Considerations, 40 ENVTL. L. 1159, 1173 (2010) (“Congress has almost always steered clear of establishing anything that remotely resembles a federal land use regulatory program . . . .”)


robust theory of federalism to tie together the disparate strands of federal land-use law.\textsuperscript{20}

This Article considers the body of federal land-use law as a whole and assesses its component parts through the lens of federalism. Part I introduces the cumulative effects doctrine that underlies federal regulation of “trivial” intrastate activity that would, in the aggregate, have a nontrivial effect on interstate commerce.\textsuperscript{21} Part I then applies the cumulative effects doctrine to the “Not in My Backyard”\textsuperscript{22} (NIMBY) phenomenon using two examples—the affordable-housing crisis and the challenge of achieving energy security—to illustrate the national implications of cumulative land-use decisions. Indeed, both of these shortages have been attributed, at least in part, to restrictive zoning policies that make it difficult to site crucial national facilities.\textsuperscript{23}

Part II argues that, despite its “patchwork” or “piecemeal” appearance, the body of federal land law is bound by a common objective—to counterbalance the harm that would result from unfettered local control over land use. Federal law can be used to subsidize development that would be suboptimally permitted by local governments, including nationally significant but locally undesirable land uses, such as cell phone towers, energy infrastructure, and affordable housing. Federal law can also be used to preserve resources that would otherwise be overexploited, as in the case of wetlands, endangered species habitats, and coastal zones. Both types of laws can be implemented directly by a federal administrative agency or indirectly using fiscal and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} An exception is Patty Salkin, who has argued that federal policies promoting sustainable development constitute a de facto national land-use policy. Salkin, supra note 6, at 382; see also Patricia E. Salkin, \textit{The Quiet Revolution and Federalism: Into the Future}, 45 J. MARSHALL L. REV. 253 (2012) (providing a comprehensive summary of federal statutes that impact land use).
  \item \textsuperscript{21} See Wickard v. Filburn, 317 U.S. 111, 127–28 (1942) (holding that Congress’s power under the Commerce Clause extends to regulating wheat grown solely for home consumption because of the aggregate impact on the national market); see also Gonzales v. Raich, 545 U.S. 1, 16–17 (2005) (upholding the federal regulation of homegrown medicinal marijuana based upon Wickard’s cumulative-impact rationale).
  \item \textsuperscript{23} This Article uses the term “restrictive zoning” to include local zoning policies that have the effect of excluding affordable housing as well as other locally undesirable uses. See infra notes 78–80 and accompanying text.
\end{itemize}
regulatory incentives to persuade local officials to participate in administering the federal program.24

Such distinctions are admittedly simplistic. Many federal land laws have multiple objectives and utilize a mix of preemptive and cooperative techniques. Nonetheless, the basic taxonomy, (a) pro-development or anti-development and (b) direct or indirect, provides a useful starting point for theorizing federal land-use law.

Building upon the theoretical framework developed in Part II, Part III takes up a basic question of federalism: How should authority be allocated between the national government and its subnational units?25 In particular, this Part assesses the relative regulatory capacities of each level of government—federal, state, and local—to design and implement land-use policies that account for the cumulative impact of land-use decisions on the nation as a whole. The persistence of localism in land-use law presents a unique forum for federalism. Traditional theories of federalism focus on the federal–state relationship or on the state–local relationship.26 The relative absence of the state in land-use law invites federalism theorists to explore the boundaries of a federal–local relationship.27


25 See ERWIN CHEMERINSKY, ENHANCING GOVERNMENT: FEDERALISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY 10 (2008) (“[U]ltimately the issue of federalism is about what allocation of power provides the best governance with the least chances of abuse.”); Heather K. Gerken, The Supreme Court, 2009 Term—Foreword: Federalism All the Way Down, 124 Harv. L. Rev. 4, 22 (2010) (asserting that what makes federalism and localism distinctive is that they provide “a broad-gauged, democratic account of how . . . nested governmental structures ought to interact”); Robert A. Schapiro, Toward a Theory of Interactive Federalism, 91 Iowa L. Rev. 243, 254 (2005) (“Federalism involves the allocation of authority to a national government and to subnational units. A theory of federalism should guide this allocation.”).


27 See, e.g., Davidson, supra note 26; Gerken, supra note 25; Hills, supra note 24; see also Erin Ryan, Federalism and the Tug of War Within: Seeking Checks and Balance in the Interjurisdictional Gray Area, 66 Md. L. Rev. 503, 573 (2007) (arguing for increased cooperation between the federal and state governments to address “interjurisdictional” regulatory problems that arise due to an overlap between a federally regulated interest and a local land-use policy).
Part III accepts this invitation, outlining a hybrid federal–local regulatory model that relies upon local officials to implement national land-use policies. This “local-official-as-federal-agent” model harnesses (a) the capacity of the federal government, with its distance from local politics and economic pressures, to coordinate land use on a national scale and (b) the capacity of local officials, who have detailed knowledge of the land and are politically accountable to the local community, to implement land-use policies at the local level. Local implementation of a federal land-use policy is likely to produce individual decisions that are consistent with national priorities but sensitive to the local context.

I. LOCAL LAND AS A NATIONAL RESOURCE

In modern society, capital, information, and resources pass seamlessly across increasingly porous jurisdictional boundaries. Land does not. Perhaps because of its immobility, the dominant descriptive and normative account of land-use law is premised upon local control. State-level zoning, once identified as “the quiet revolution” in land-use law, failed to alter the fundamentally local nature of land-use law. Periodic calls for an increased federal role in land-use planning have similarly gone unanswered. The federal judiciary has

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29 FRED BOSSELMAN & DAVID CALLIES, COUNCIL ON ENVTL. QUALITY, THE QUIET REVOLUTION IN LAND USE CONTROL (1971).

30 See infra note 234.

31 See, e.g., Kayden, supra note 4 (discussing the federal government’s limited role in land-use planning); Salkin, supra note 6 (describing previous efforts at national land-use reform); Wildermuth, supra note 16 (describing two failed attempts to bring order to land-use law through national land-use planning); cf. William F. Pedersen, Using Federal Environmental Regulations to Bargain for Private Land Use Control, 21 YALE J. ON REG. 1, 21–23 (2004) (identifying political opposition to federal attempts to shape local land use through the CWA and ESA).
consistently refused to hear zoning cases, reinforcing the notion that land-use law is local law.32

In a recent article, Professor William Fischel assessed the evolution of zoning and concluded that “[t]he most striking quality about zoning is that it is still local.”33 Professor Fischel observed that, in contrast to zoning, “many formerly local activities such as road building, public health, care for the poor, school finance, prosecution of corruption, and water quality regulation (even drinking water regulation), have been largely pre-empted by the state and federal government.”34 Most commentators concur, emphasizing a national understanding that land use is primarily a prerogative of local governments.35

This Part establishes a doctrinal basis and normative justification for federal land-use law, both of which derive from the cumulative effects of local land-use decisions on interstate commerce and the national welfare. Section A provides a context for federal land law by describing the unsuccessful attempt to nationalize land-use law along with environmental law during the 1970s. Section B introduces the cumulative effects doctrine that underlies federal regulation of purely intrastate activity that would, in the aggregate, have a nontrivial effect on interstate commerce. Section C applies the cumulative effects doctrine to the NIMBY phenomenon, using affordable housing and energy infrastructure to illustrate the potentially significant social and economic costs of cumulative land-use decisions.36

32 See 1 STEVEN H. STEINGLASS, SECTION 1983 LITIGATION IN STATE COURTS § 6:16 (2011) (noting the reluctance of federal courts to hear zoning cases); Fischel, supra note 4, § 5, at 10 (describing “procedural barriers to access to the federal courts”); Gregory Overstreet, The Ripeness Doctrine of the Taking Clause: A Survey of Decisions Showing Just How Far Federal Courts Will Go to Avoid Adjudicating Land Use Cases, 10 J. LAND USE & ENVTL. L. 91, 92–94 (1994) (arguing that federal courts rely upon the ripeness doctrine to dismiss land-use cases because “they simply do not like to hear them”).

33 Fischel, supra note 4, § 3, at 4.

34 Id.

35 See supra note 4.

36 WILLIAM A. FISCHEL, THE ECONOMICS OF ZONING LAWS: A PROPERTY RIGHTS APPROACH TO AMERICAN LAND USE CONTROLS 19 (1985) (“The notion that zoning is just a matter of local concern is incorrect when the cumulative effect of these regulations is considered.”). Professor William Buzbee makes a similar point in the context of urban sprawl, noting: “Even seemingly local activity such as home building patterns can generate much larger harms. Viewed in the aggregate, sprawling patterns of development are expensive for local governments that must invest in infrastructure, schools, and other services as agriculture and green spaces are converted to residential use.” William W. Buzbee, Recognizing the Regulatory Commons: A Theory of Regulatory Gaps, 89 IOWA L. REV. 1, 10 (2003); accord Holly Doremus & W. Michael Hanemann, Of Babies and Bathwater: Why the Clean Air Act’s Cooperative Federalism Framework Is Useful for Addressing Global Warming, 50 ARIZ. L. REV. 799, 828–29 (2008) (arguing that local governments, in the aggregate, can utilize land-use controls to substantially reduce greenhouse emissions); Kevin M. Stack & Michael P. Vandenbergh, The One Percent Problem, 111 COLUM. L. REV. 1385 (2011) (arguing that federal...
A. The Nonfederalization of Land-Use Law

Less than fifty years ago, environmental regulation, like land-use regulation, occurred mainly at the local level. A few federal laws addressed unique national concerns such as maintaining the navigability of interstate waters, but beyond that, federal support for environmental protection was primarily limited to sponsoring scientific research. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Congress turned the traditional allocation of authority on its head, enacting comprehensive federal environmental statutes, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Clean Air Amendments of 1970, the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, later amended by the Clean Water Act of 1977, and the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Given the inextricable connection between environmental quality and land use, a national land-use policy seemed imminent. It was not to be.

In 1970, Senator Henry Jackson introduced the National Land Use Policy Act (NLUPA) into the U.S. Senate. The proposed law sought to engage public authorities at the national, state, and local levels in cooperative land-use...

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NLUPA would have provided funding for the formulation of state land-use plans, established a national data system to aid in land-use planning, and created a single federal agency to monitor federal compliance with state plans. NLUPA faced political opposition and was ultimately defeated in the House of Representatives.

A second attempt to coordinate land-use planning on a national scale under the Clean Air Act paradoxically served to reinforce local land-use authority. Under the Clean Air Act, states must design state implementation plans (SIPs) to meet national air-quality and emissions standards. In its first iteration, the Clean Air Act Amendments required states to include “land-use and transportation controls” in their SIPs if such controls were necessary to achieve federal air-quality standards. Though states that refused or were unable to comply with this directive risked having their state plans preempted by a federal implementation plan (FIP), both the states and the EPA recognized that the threat was largely illusory. The EPA lacked the administrative resources and localized knowledge necessary to directly implement this program.

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45 Kayden, supra note 4, at 448; John R. Nolon, The National Land Use Policy Act, 13 PACE ENVTL. L. REV. 519, 522 (1996) (noting that, through NLUPA, Senator Jackson intended to create “a system that would have infused comprehensiveness, coordination and cooperation into a system that increasingly exhibits conflict and confusion”). According to the legislative history, the proposed act would have established a national policy to encourage and assist the several States to more effectively exercise their constitutional responsibilities for the planning, management, and administration of the Nation’s land resources through the development and implementation of comprehensive “Statewide Environmental, Recreational and Industrial Land Use Plans” . . . and management programs designed to achieve an ecologically and environmentally sound use of the Nation’s land resources.

S. 3354, 91st Cong. § 402(a) (1970).

46 Salkin, supra note 6, at 384.

47 LYDAY, supra note 44, at 45–47; Bronin, supra note 4, at 262; Nolon, supra note 4, at 367 (noting that the NLUPA was defeated, “in part[,] because it was regarded as an assault on the independent authority of the states to control land use”); Salkin, supra note 6, at 384.


50 Clean Air Act § 110(c)(1), 42 U.S.C. § 7410(c)(1).

51 See Dwyer, supra note 19, at 1201 (“EPA sensed both its own political and technical limitations and the mammoth technical task that the states faced.”).
In 1977, Congress backtracked, repealing the “land-use” portion of “land-use and transportation controls.” In the 1990 amendments, Congress cautiously imposed new transportation-control requirements in certain nonattainment areas but did not reinstate the land-use controls. Instead, the 1990 amendments retreated further from land-use regulation, declaring that the Clean Air Act does not infringe “on the existing authority of counties and cities to plan or control land use.”

Not surprisingly, much environmental damage today is caused by nonpoint-source pollution resulting from land-use decisions that are within the jurisdictional purview of local governments. As the chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality observed when lobbying on behalf of NLUPA, land use is “the single most important element affecting the quality of our environment which remains substantially unaddressed as a matter of national policy.”

B. The Cumulative Effects Doctrine

Although there has never been a national land-use policy, federal law has long been used to account for the cumulative impact of local land-use decisions. In 1938, Congress passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act. The Act was designed to drive up the price of wheat by strictly limiting the number of acres of land that could be used for the production of wheat. Roscoe Filburn grew wheat on nearly double the number of acres he was allotted under

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54 Nolon, supra note 4, at 365. Nonpoint-source water pollution includes “the runoff from impervious surfaces such as roofs, driveways, parking lots, and roads; erosion and sedimentation caused by development activities, including the removal of vegetation and site disturbance; and the movement into water bodies of fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides from lawns, golf courses, and farms.” Id. at 369; accord Doremus & Hanemann, supra note 36, at 828–29 (arguing that local governments, in the aggregate, can utilize land-use controls to substantially reduce greenhouse emissions); Nolon, supra note 4, at 371 (“Nonpoint source pollution is the cause of nearly half of the remaining water quality problems in the United States and is intimately related to land use.” (footnote omitted)); A. Dan Tarlock, The Potential Role of Local Governments in Watershed Management, 20 PACE ENVT'L. L. REV. 149, 152 (2002) (describing local control over land uses that generate nonpoint-source pollution and impact biodiversity).
55 Nolon, supra note 4, at 372 (quoting Henry L. Diamond, Land Use: Environmental Orphan, ENVTL. F., Jan./Feb. 1993, at 31, 32) (internal quotation marks omitted).
the Act. Filburn argued that the Act could not apply to the excess wheat he
produced on his land because the wheat was intended for his private use and
would never enter into the stream of commerce.

In *Wickard v. Filburn*, the Court unanimously upheld Congress’s power
under the Commerce Clause to impose federal limits on local land use.60
Although the Court agreed that Filburn’s excess wheat would have a negligible
impact on interstate commerce, the Court declined to evaluate this activity in
isolation. Instead, the Court considered Filburn’s activity as part of a larger
economic enterprise and concluded that, in the aggregate, “his contribution,
taken together with that of many others similarly situated,” would have a
substantial impact on interstate commerce.

The cumulative effects doctrine, also known as the aggregate effects
docline or the cumulative impacts doctrine,62 recognizes that “a single activity
that itself has no discernible effect on interstate commerce may still be
regulated [federally] if the aggregate effect of that class of activity has a
substantial impact on interstate commerce.”63 So, for example, Congress may
regulate isolated, intrastate acts of discrimination,64 entirely intrastate credit
transactions,65 surface mining on privately owned land,66 and the consumption
of homegrown medicinal marijuana,67 if it determines that the cumulative
impact of the regulated economic activity substantially interferes with a
national market.68

58 Id. at 114–15.
59 Id. at 119.
60 Id. at 128–29.
61 Id. at 127–29.
62 J.B. Ruhl & James Salzman, Climate Change, Dead Zones, and Massive Problems in the Administrative
63 Solid Waste Agency of N. Cook Cnty. v. U.S. Army Corps of Eng’rs, 191 F.3d 845, 850 (7th Cir.
1999), rev’d on other grounds, 531 U.S. 159 (2001); accord United States v. Darby, 312 U.S. 100, 119–20
(1941) (noting that Congress may regulate intrastate activity that has a “substantial effect” on interstate
commerce); Ruhl & Salzman, supra note 62, at 93 n.138 (describing the use of the cumulative effects doctrine
in federal law).
64 See Heart of Atlanta Motel, Inc. v. United States, 379 U.S. 241, 258 (1964); id. at 276 (Black, J.,
concurring) (considering the aggregate effect of local discriminatory acts on the interstate market); Ruhl &
Salzman, supra note 62, at 93 (noting that employment discrimination cases often consider the cumulative
effects of employment practices and employer statements).
67 Gonzales v. Raich, 545 U.S. 1, 22 (2005).
68 During the Rehnquist Court’s “federalism revival,” the Court struck down several federal statutes
based upon its determination that the regulated activity, possession of guns near schools in United States v.
Lopez, 514 U.S. 549, 561 (1995), and gender-motivated crimes in United States v. Morrison, 529 U.S. 598,
In addition, federal regulation in fields as varied as banking law, securities law, disability law, discrimination law, and environmental law require administrative agencies to consider the cumulative effect of individual actions on federal policy goals. For example, in issuing federal permits under section 404 of the CWA, the Army Corps of Engineers does not simply consider the impact of filling an individual wetland but rather the cumulative impact of wetlands development. Under the ESA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is required to determine whether a proposed action, “taken together with cumulative effects, is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species.” Similarly, in administering the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality is charged with assessing the cumulative impacts of proposed actions.

In contrast to environmental law, traditional land-use law has not been nationalized. Indeed, “environmental policy and land-use policy in the United States remain . . . separate and distinct fields, created and implemented by different levels of governments and studied by different sets of academics and professionals.” The next section addresses some of the implications of this distinction.

C. The Cumulative Effects of NIMBY: Beyond the Backyard

The local land-use regulatory process is, by design, quite limited in scope. Land-use plans traditionally account for land located within municipal boundaries.
boundaries; land-use decisions promote the welfare of the local community, often at the expense of broader national policies or goals. In the late 1960s, the term “exclusionary zoning” was coined to describe the way in which traditional land-use regulations systematically exclude low-income persons from many residential communities.

In addition to the poor, localities routinely use their zoning powers to exclude an extensive array of locally undesirable land uses, including group homes for the disabled, cell phone towers, and distributed-renewable-energy facilities, such as backyard wind turbines and rooftop solar panels. This Article, therefore, uses the term “restrictive zoning” to encompass the use

74 See Kayden, supra note 4, at 449–50; Ostrow, supra note 2, at 294.
75 See Griffith, supra note 6, at 526 (noting that traditional municipal law does not require localities to consider the extralocal impact of their decisions); Shelley Ross Saxer, Local Autonomy or Regionalism?: Sharing the Benefits and Burdens of Suburban Commercial Development, 30 Ind. L. Rev. 659, 659 (1997) (noting that “[l]and use decisions are generally made solely by local officials elected by and responsible only to citizens within the local municipality” but nonetheless “impose burdens on citizens outside the local municipality”).
76 Lawrence Gene Sager, Tight Little Islands: Exclusionary Zoning, Equal Protection, and the Indigent, 21 Stan. L. Rev. 767, 767 (1969); Tim Iglesias, Our Pluralist Housing Ethics and the Struggle for Affordability, 42 Wake Forest L. Rev. 511, 561 (2007) (“While there is no universally agreed-upon definition of ‘exclusionary zoning,’ the term generally refers to zoning ordinances and planning codes ‘that have the intent or effect of excluding disadvantaged groups, particularly low- and moderate-income people and racial minorities, from a locality.’” (quoting Ken Zimmerman & Arielle Cohen, Exclusionary Zoning: Constitutional and Federal Statutory Responses, in THE LEGAL GUIDE TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING 39, 41 (Tim Iglesias & Rochelle E. Lento eds., 2005))).
78 See Peter W. Salsich, Jr., Group Homes, Shelters and Congregate Housing: Deinstitutionalization Policies and the NIMBY Syndrome, 21 Real Prop. Prob. & Tr. J. 413, 418 (1986) (noting local opposition to a wide variety of group homes, including homes for “the elderly, halfway houses for prisoners, residential treatment facilities for alcoholics and drug addicts, . . . [homeless] shelters . . . . [and] group homes for the developmentally disabled”).
of the local zoning authority to exclude undesirable facilities, as well as affordable housing.

That local zoning produces restrictive land-use patterns is hardly surprising. In *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.*, the Supreme Court expressly rejected the notion that a locality should take regional needs into consideration in devising its zoning ordinances. Instead, the Court maintained that “the village, though physically a suburb of Cleveland, is politically a separate municipality, with powers of its own and authority to govern itself as it sees fit within the limits of the organic law of its creation and the State and Federal Constitutions.” The Court’s decision condoned an intentionally parochial system that relies upon local political boundaries, rather than natural geographic boundaries, to determine the scope of land-use regulatory authority.

Where the local land-use process is dominated by NIMBY sentiment (as is the case in many elite suburban communities), local residents have the economic incentive and legal authority to exclude undesirable developments, without regard for the impact on regional or national land-use priorities. Even diverse localities, ones that do not fall within the affluent suburban model, may have a proclivity toward restrictive zoning. In a recent study of zoning decisions in New York City, Professors Hills and Schleicher concluded that the *seriatim* method that cities use to make land-use decisions systematically overprotects incumbent land users against new entrants, particularly in high-value housing areas. As Professors Hills and Schleicher observe:

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81 272 U.S. 365, 389 (1926).
82 *Id.*
83 *Wolf*, supra note 77, at 137.
84 According to Professor William Fischel, small local governments are often responsive to their largest and most motivated constituency—homeowners. See *Fischel*, supra note 22, at 5–6; accord Roderick M. Hills, Jr. & David Schleicher, *Balancing the “Zoning Budget,”* 61 CASE W. RES. L. REV. (forthcoming 2012) (manuscript at 11–12), available at http://ssrn.com/abstract=1816368 (describing homeowner opposition to new development) (footnotes omitted)).
85 Incumbent property owners tend reflexively to resist all new development, even development that would increase local property values. *Ostrow*, supra note 2, at 298–300; *Peñalver*, supra note 3, at 831–32; Christopher Serkin, *Big Differences for Small Governments: Local Governments and the Takings Clause*, 81 N.Y.U. L. REV. 1624, 1655–56 (2006) (arguing that NIMBYs are motivated both by a desire to protect property values and by a desire to preserve community character); see also Ashira Pelman Ostrow, *Minority Interests, Majority Politics: A Comment on Richard Collins’ “Telluride’s Tale of Eminent Domain, Home Rule, and Retroactivity,*” 86 DENV. U. L. REV. 1459, 1467–68 (2009) (illustrating the impact of NIMBYism in preventing arguably beneficial facilities from being constructed outside of Telluride).
86 *Hills & Schleicher*, supra note 84 (manuscript at 9).
The essence of the problem is that the neighbors who are physically close to parcels proposed for additional housing generally have strong incentives and organizational capacity to oppose changes in the zoning status quo. . . . By contrast, the persons benefited by [these] proposals . . . are dispersed and disorganized.87

As a result of this asymmetry, the problems of locating development inside a city frequently parallel those caused by suburban exclusionary zoning.88

While entirely rational from the perspective of an individual homeowner and of the community,89 restrictive zoning across multiple jurisdictions results in the systematic exclusion of certain land uses, and users, from large parts of a region with significant extralocal social and economic consequences. To illustrate, consider two contexts in which the cumulative impact of restrictive local zoning policies generates land-use patterns that conflict with national policy goals: (1) the development of affordable housing and (2) the development of multijurisdictional physical infrastructure, including energy infrastructure and telecommunications facilities.

1. Confronting the National Housing Crisis

As the 2007–2008 subprime-mortgage crisis and ensuing economic recession strikingly revealed, the modern real-estate-finance market is national in scope.90 When mortgages are securitized, a default in one jurisdiction affects investors throughout the country, with an obvious impact on interstate commerce.91 The national foreclosure crisis has “drained household wealth, 87 Id. (manuscript at 5–6).
88 For an overview of the interplay between NIMBY and affordable housing, see Iglesias, supra note 76, at 566; and Peter W. Salsich, Jr., Toward a Policy of Heterogeneity: Overcoming a Long History of Socioeconomic Segregation in Housing, 42 WAKE FOREST L. REV. 459, 497–98 (2007).
89 See Fischel, supra note 4, § 2, at 3 (arguing that NIMBY is a rational homeowner response).
91 See generally Michael H. Schill, The Impact of the Capital Markets on Real Estate Law and Practice, 32 J. MARSHALL L. REV. 269 (1999) (providing an overview of the way in which real estate markets have been transformed by securitization of mortgages). On the connection between the securitization of sub-prime mortgages and the financial crisis, see Shelby D. Green, Disquiet on the Home Front: Disturbing Crises in the
ruined the credit standing of many borrowers and devastated [a disproportionate number of minority] communities." It has also thrust the challenge of developing affordable housing back onto the national agenda.

In the wake of the foreclosure crisis, the federal government has enacted a variety of programs designed to subsidize the development of affordable housing. This flurry of programs is but a continuation of a decades-old national housing policy aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing. The United States Housing Act of 1937 declared its intent "to promote the general welfare of the Nation by employing its funds and credit . . . to remedy the unsafe and insanitary housing conditions and the acute shortage of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income." Since that time, the federal government has spent tens of billions of dollars every year on a baffling array of housing programs and subsidies.

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93 See Nicholas J. Brunick & Patrick O’B. Maier, Renewing the Land of Opportunity, 19 J. Affordable Housing & Community Dev. L. 161, 184–85 (2010) (listing Obama Administration proposals to facilitate affordable housing); Charles L. Edison, Affordable Housing—An Intimate History, 20 J. Affordable Housing & Community Dev. L. 193, 206 (2011) (describing efforts to overcome challenges to the Low Income Housing Tax Credit); Murray S. Levin, Digest of Selected Articles, 39 Real Est. L.J. 542, 544–45 (2011) (describing the National Housing Trust Fund, which was created under the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 but is currently unfunded); Lewis, supra note 91, at 499–503 (listing government responses to housing-market problems, including a commitment to affordable housing).

94 See, e.g., Levin, supra note 93, at 542 (“Since the Great depression, U.S. federal policy has promoted affordable housing for the poor.”); Lewis, supra note 91, at 483–89 (describing federal efforts to increase affordable rental housing and home ownership for those with low incomes). See generally Edison, supra note 93 (discussing the history of public housing in the United States).


Despite this expenditure, the gap between supply and demand of affordable housing continues to grow.\footnote{Joint Ctr. for Hous. Studies of Harv. Univ., supra note 92, at 27 (“In 1999, 8.5 million extremely low-income renter households... competed for 3.6 million [affordable and available] units... By 2009, the mismatch had grown to 10.4 million extremely low-income renter households and just 3.7 million affordable and available units.” (citation omitted)).} Even where federal funds are available, exclusionary zoning policies make it extremely difficult to site affordable-housing developments.\footnote{See Tim Iglesias, Managing Local Opposition to Affordable Housing: A New Approach to NIMBY, 12 J. Affordable Housing & Community Dev. L. 78, 79 (2002); Iglesias, supra note 76, at 566 (“Attempts to site affordable housing in ‘established neighborhoods’ provokes stereotypes of ‘those people’ who, it is feared, will bring chaos to an otherwise stable and wholesome social order in the neighborhood.”).} Euclidean zoning is premised on the notion that certain high-value land uses should be insulated from other, less desirable land uses. In Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co., the Court famously described multifamily housing as “a mere parasite, constructed in order to take advantage of the open spaces and attractive surroundings created by the residential character of the [single-family] district.”\footnote{272 U.S. 365, 394 (1926).} Exclusionary zoning ordinances and planning codes typically exclude multifamily dwellings, impose minimum building- and lot-size requirements, and restrict the number of permitted bedrooms.\footnote{Iglesias, supra note 76, at 561; see also Lior Jacob Strahilevitz, Exclusionary Amenities in Residential Communities, 92 Va. L. Rev. 437, 452 (2006) (stating that antidiscrimination laws force communities wishing to exclude to use proxies, such as single-family homes on large lots in the suburbs).}

The exclusionary pattern of development gained national attention with the Mount Laurel litigation,\footnote{Mount Laurel I, 336 A.2d at 724–25.} in which the Supreme Court of New Jersey required every municipality to provide affordable housing for its “fair share” of the regional demand.\footnote{See id. at 726 (“When regulation does have a substantial external impact, the welfare of the state’s citizens beyond the borders of the particular municipality cannot be disregarded and must be recognized and served.”).} In contrast to the Euclid Court, the Mount Laurel court required municipalities to exercise their land-use regulatory authority to promote the welfare of the state as a whole, rather than exclusively to benefit their own residents.\footnote{See Hills Dev. Co. v. Township of Bernards (Mount Laurel III), 510 A.2d 621 (N.J. 1986); S. Burlington Cnty. NAACP v. Township of Mount Laurel (Mount Laurel II), 456 A.2d 390 (N.J. 1983); S. Burlington Cnty. NAACP v. Township of Mount Laurel (Mount Laurel I), 336 A.2d 713 (N.J. 1975); see also Salsich, supra note 88, at 473 (“The Mount Laurel litigation and similar efforts in other states became the focal point for advocates of affordable housing... because the Supreme Court had ruled a few years earlier that there was no federal constitutional right to housing.”).} The ensuing decades have proven that Mount Laurel’s...
fair-share approach is the exception, rather than the rule. The regional
approach to affordable housing has been difficult to implement in New Jersey
itself\footnote{See David N. Kinsey, The Growth Share Approach to Mount Laurel Housing Obligations: Origins, Hijacking, and Future, 63 RUTGERS L. REV. 867 (2011) (discussing the battle over the formula for determining affordable-housing needs in New Jersey); Alan Mallach, The Mount Laurel Doctrine and the Uncertainties of Social Policy in a Time of Retrenchment, 63 RUTGERS L. REV. 849, 851–59 (2011) (detailing many challenges to the implementation of the New Jersey Fair Housing Act since 2002); Matthew Shiers Sternman, Note, Integrating the Suburbs: Harnessing the Benefits of Mixed-Income Housing in Westchester County and Other Low-Poverty Areas, 44 COLUM. J.L. & SOC. PROBS. 1, 13–18 (2010) (noting factors that have thwarted the New Jersey Fair Housing Act’s effectiveness).} and has been ignored by the vast majority of states.\footnote{See John J. Delaney, Addressing the Workforce Housing Crisis in Maryland and Throughout the Nation: Do Land Use Regulations that Preclude Reasonable Housing Opportunity Based upon Income Violate the Individual Liberties Protected by State Constitutions?, 33 U. BALT. L. REV. 153, 170–76 (2004) (discussing efforts to curtail affordable housing in several states); Harold A. McDougall, From Litigation to Legislation in Exclusionary Zoning, 22 HARV. C.R.–C.L. L. REV. 623, 623–25 (1987) (noting that a strong local preference for the ability to exclude renders state courts and state legislatures reluctant to address exclusionary zoning); Henry A. Span, How the Courts Should Fight Exclusionary Zoning, 32 SETON HALL L. REV. 1, 72 (2001) (describing the New Jersey courts’ success as “marginal” and noting that no other state court has gone as far as the Supreme Court of New Jersey in encouraging affordable housing).}

2. The Infrastructure Challenge

a. Energy Security as a National Policy Goal

generators,\(^\text{109}\) and the Production Tax Credit (PTC), which subsidized the development of wind energy.\(^\text{110}\) Moreover, renewable energy consistently receives overwhelming bipartisan support in national polls.\(^\text{111}\)

In recent years, significant increases in installed wind capacity\(^\text{112}\) and domestic production of oil and gas have reduced reliance on foreign imports and inched the United States closer to achieving its energy goals.\(^\text{113}\) Yet, restrictive zoning and NIMBYism continue to hinder the development of nationwide energy infrastructure.\(^\text{114}\) Siting is particularly important to the development of renewable energy. In contrast to traditional generating facilities, which could be built close to demand centers, renewable-energy generators must be built near renewable resources. Often these resources are located in remote areas, far from existing transmission lines.\(^\text{115}\) Thus, in addition to siting wind turbines and solar panels, a key challenge for renewable


\(^{111}\) See Energy, POLLINGREPORT.COM, http://www.pollingreport.com/energy.htm (last visited Aug. 22, 2012) (collecting data from a CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll indicating that 83% of people favor greater reliance on wind power, a Pew Research Center study indicating that 74% of people favor increased federal funding of wind power, a Pew Research/National Journal Congressional Connection poll indicating that 78% of people favor adoption of federal RPS, and an ABC News/Washington Post poll indicating that 87% of people favor developing more solar and wind power).


\(^{115}\) See Salkin & Ostrow, supra note 28, at 1062.
energy is siting new interstate transmission lines linking electric generators to population centers.\textsuperscript{116}

In the Energy Act of 2005\textsuperscript{117} (EPAct), Congress granted FERC the authority to preempt state siting authority for certain transmission lines and for liquefied-natural-gas (LNG) terminals.\textsuperscript{118} Thus far, FERC has not had much success siting transmission lines\textsuperscript{119} or liquefied-natural-gas-terminals.\textsuperscript{120} Navigating the decentralized siting process continues to hinder the development of a modern, secure smart grid.

\textit{b. Process Preemption in Telecommunications Siting}

A decade earlier a similar tension between local land-use authority and national land-use priorities prompted Congress to include a National Wireless Telecommunications Siting Policy as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.\textsuperscript{121} The Telecommunications Siting Policy bridges the national–local

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} See Eagle, supra note 114, at 2–3; Klass & Wilson, supra note 6 (manuscript at 41–42); Jim Rossi, The Trojan Horse of Electric Power Transmission Line Siting Authority, 39 ENVTL. L. 1015, 1016 (2009) (noting that existing transmission grids cannot accommodate additional renewable-energy resources); Salkin & Ostrow, supra note 28, at 1062–63 (describing obstacles to wind energy, including NIMBY, inadequate transmission, and the intermittent nature of wind as an energy source).
\item \textsuperscript{119} Klass & Wilson, supra note 6 (manuscript at 12); Rossi, supra note 116, at 1033–35.
\end{itemize}
divide using what I have previously described as “process preemption” to streamline the telecommunications-siting and permitting process. In a process-preemption regime, Congress imposes baseline federal requirements on the local siting process. Within the federal framework, local officials retain substantial discretion to shape and customize the broad federal policy guidelines in response to community preferences.

Prior to the passage of the Telecommunications Siting Policy, inconsistent local permitting processes and strong local opposition significantly delayed and often prevented cell-phone-tower siting. Recognizing the importance of developing a nationwide telecommunications network, the House of Representatives first considered granting the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) exclusive siting authority over telecommunications towers. The House Facilities Siting Policies called for the FCC to establish a negotiated rule-making committee to develop substantive policies related to wireless-facilities siting that would consider both the national interest in enhancing coverage and the legitimate interests of state and local governments in regulating the use of land within their own borders. Like the EPAct, this proposal would have entirely preempted the local land-use process, replacing local zoning officials with federal administrative agents. In contrast, the corresponding Senate bill would have left siting authority exclusively under the control of local authorities.

The House–Senate conference committee adopted a compromise, enacting a Telecommunications Siting Policy that imposes federal constraints on the siting process but leaves primary siting authority in the hands of local regulators. The Siting Policy, thus, allows local regulators to tailor the policy to local conditions and to experiment with siting standards and

122 Ostrow, supra note 2.
123 Id. at 289.
124 According to the conference committee report, “The conference agreement creates a new section 704 which prevents Commission preemption of local and State land use decisions and preserves the authority of State and local governments over zoning and land use matters except in the limited circumstances set forth in the conference agreement.” H.R. REP. No. 104-458, at 207–08 (1996) (Conf. Rep.).
125 See Ostrow, supra note 2, at 317.
127 See S. 652, 104th Cong. (1996) (making no mention of telecommunications siting). See generally Petersburg Cellular P’ship v. Bd. of Supervisors, 205 F.3d 688, 697–98 (4th Cir. 2000) (per curiam) (noting the difference between the House version, which would have empowered the FCC to directly regulate the siting of towers, and the Senate version, which would have allowed local zoning officials to retain that authority).
128 Ostrow, supra note 2, at 318.
strategies. Procedurally, the Telecommunications Siting Policy requires that local governments respond to any siting application “within a reasonable period of time,” and that a local government decision to deny a permit “be in writing and supported by substantial evidence contained in a written record.”

Under the Telecommunications Siting Policy, state and local governments retain almost complete authority over the substance of local zoning codes. The Siting Policy imposes three substantive constraints on local decision making, preempting local siting decisions that “unreasonably discriminate among providers of functionally equivalent services,” “prohibit[] the provision of personal wireless services,” or vary from FCC regulations governing radio-frequency emissions. Though siting decisions must be supported by “substantial evidence contained in a written record,” the decision itself is made in accordance with substantive state and local law. In essence, the Telecommunications Siting Policy sets out the degree of evidence needed to support the zoning decision but does not dictate what type of evidence must be considered.

As an empirical matter, the TCA’s process-preemption regime has been a success; since 1996, the number of cell phone towers sited across the country has increased exponentially. The sophisticated national telecommunications network stands in stark contrast to the antiquated and inadequate energy-transmission grid. Yet many questions remain unanswered. Indeed, the questions have yet to be asked: How does the siting policy work? Why does it work? What are the costs and benefits of this regulatory framework as

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129 See id. at 305, 319 (describing how states can experiment with cell-tower siting within the confines of the Telecommunications Siting Policy).


131 Id. § 332(c)(7)(B)(iii).

132 Id. § 332(c)(7)(B)(i)(I)–(II).

133 Id. § 332(c)(7)(B)(i)(II).

134 Id. § 332(c)(7)(B)(iv).

135 See Eagle, supra note 79, at 477 (“[F]ederal law specifies the degree or quantum of evidence needed to legitimize, under federal law, the exercise of legislative powers devolved upon local boards, under state law, to enforce substantive rights established by state law.”); see also Susan Lorde Martin, Wind Farms and NIMBYs: Generating Conflict, Reducing Litigation, 20 FORDHAM ENVTL. L. REV. 427, 433–34 (2010) (citing cases holding that substantial evidence must be based on existing state and local law).

136 See USCOC of Greater Mo. v. City of Ferguson, 583 F.3d 1035, 1042 (8th Cir. 2009); T-Mobile Cent., LLC v. Unified Gov’t, 546 F.3d 1299, 1307 (10th Cir. 2008); U.S. Cellular Tel., L.L.C. v. City of Broken Arrow, 340 F.3d 1122, 1133 (10th Cir. 2003); New Par v. City of Saginaw, 301 F.3d 390, 398 (6th Cir. 2002); Town of Amhestr v. Omnipoint Commc’ns Enters., 173 F.3d 9, 14–16 (1st Cir. 1999).

137 Ostrow, supra note 2, at 293.
compared with alternative strategies? The next Part considers these foundational questions to develop a theory of land law federalism.

II. FEDERAL LAND LAW: OF MONEY AND POWER

Notwithstanding the rhetoric of local control, modern land-use law involves a significant, though poorly understood, national dimension. Given the variation in form and substance, it might appear, as others have observed, that the federal patchwork lacks internal coherence or underlying logic. This Part argues that the disparate strands of federal land law are, in fact, bound together by a common objective—to account for the cumulative impact of local land-use decisions. In this way, federal land laws counterbalance the development that would result from unfettered local control.

To differentiate between various modes of federal regulation, this Part categorizes federal land laws along substantive and procedural axes. Substantively, federal laws can be classified as (1) pro-development, subsidizing land use that would be overly restricted by local governments, or (2) anti-development, restricting land use that would be excessively permitted by local governments. Procedurally, federal land laws are implemented either (1) directly, by a federal administrative agency, or (2) indirectly, by local officials serving as federal agents.

The notion that nonfederal regulators can, and do, implement federal law is not new. Under the Supreme Court’s commandeering doctrine, as developed in New York v. United States and Printz v. United States, “[t]he Federal Government may neither issue directives requiring the States to address particular problems, nor command the States’ officers, or those of their political subdivisions, to administer or enforce a federal regulatory program.”

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138 See supra notes 15–17.
139 See Abbe R. Gluck, Intrastatutory Federalism and Statutory Interpretation: State Implementation of Federal Law in Health Reform and Beyond, 121 YALE L.J. 534, 565–66 (2011) (using legislation theory to analyze the varying roles that state actors play in implementing federal statutes); Hills, supra note 24, at 815 (analyzing the utility to the federal government of enlisting state actors to accomplish federal objectives); Erin Ryan, Negotiating Federalism, 52 B.C.L. REV. 1, 64–65 (2011) (describing state and local implementation of federal policy).
142 Id. at 935. To be sure, the boundaries of the commandeering doctrine are murky. In Reno v. Condon, 528 U.S. 141 (2000), the Court held that a federal statute that prohibited state motor vehicle departments from selling drivers’ personal information did not commands state officials. As other scholars have noted, it is not
Congress, however, may offer incentives—financial and regulatory—to persuade states to legislate in accordance with federal interests. Traditionally, these mechanisms have been called “cooperative,” although commentators have long noted the noncooperative, or coercive, elements of these regimes. As Professor Roderick Hills first observed:

There are two mechanisms by which non-federal governments become the agencies of the Congress: first, the Congress can hire state and local officials with federal grants-in-aid, and, second, the federal government can allow state or local law to displace federal regulation that would otherwise preempt such non-federal law if the non-federal law meets the standards established by Congress.

To avoid commandeering concerns, federal policies that are implemented directly by local officials rely upon conditional spending (money) and/or conditional preemption (power) to encourage local land-use regulators to implement federal law. Moreover, federal land laws utilize two distinct forms of conditional preemption. The first, which I label the “federal-regulation model,” encourages local implementation by threatening to replace clear why “[s]tate authority implicated in performing a background check on state citizens is protected, but state authority implicated in gathering and reporting information about state citizens (e.g., missing children to the federal government, or drivers’ information to willing buyers) is not.” Ryan, supra note 27, at 548; accord Erwin Chemerinsky, Empowering States: A Rebuttal to Dr. Greve, 33 PEPP. L. REV. 91, 93–94 (2005). See New York, 505 U.S. at 166–69; Roderick M. Hills, Jr., Dissecting the State: The Use of Federal Law to Free State and Local Officials from State Legislatures’ Control, 97 MICH. L. REV. 1201, 1204 n.12 (1999) (describing cooperative federalism as “intergovernmental cooperation . . . under which nonfederal officials implement federal policy”).

143 See Adler, Judicial Federalism, supra note 37, at 385; Jessica Bulman-Pozen & Heather K. Gerken, Uncooperative Federalism, 118 YALE L.J. 1256, 1284–91 (2009) (exploring the potential benefits of uncooperative state regimes). Roderick M. Hills, Jr., Federalism in Constitutional Context, 22 HARV. J.L. & PUB. POL’Y 181, 184 (1998). Professor Hills also notes that “Congress may allow non-federal governments to enforce its regulations only if they meet federal standards, and Congress may encourage non-federal governments to submit implementation plans by subsidizing the cost of implementation with federal grants.” Id. 145 New York, 505 U.S. at 176. In New York, New York State challenged a provision of the Low Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act that required states to either (1) regulate low-level radioactive waste according to federal standards or (2) take title to and assume liability for waste produced within the state’s borders. Id. at 174–75. The Court determined that Congress lacked the power to enact either of these options as mandatory, independent legislation and therefore could not force the states to choose between the two, noting that a “choice between two unconstitutionally coercive regulatory techniques is no choice at all.” Id. at 176. The Court, therefore, struck down the take-title provision for “commandeer[ing]” the state regulatory apparatus in violation of the Tenth Amendment. Id. at 175–77.
state law with federal law. The second form, which I call the “market-alternative model,” encourages local implementation by threatening to leave the area unregulated, subject only to the free market.

There are a variety of reasons why Congress chooses to regulate through the states, rather than regulating directly. Perhaps the most basic is as Professor Erin Ryan explains: “Congress creates programs of cooperative federalism in commerce-related realms it could manage from top to bottom—but chooses not to, because the federal government lacks the local expertise, regulatory authority, boots on the ground, or perceived legitimacy—in short, the capacity—that state government can provide.”

At the outset of this undertaking, a disclaimer is in order. This Part develops a theoretical framework for federal land law. I do not propose a single model or advocate the adoption of a comprehensive national land-use policy along the lines of the failed NLUPA. The first is impossible for practical reasons—by its very nature, land resists generalization. The second is unlikely for political reasons. As Congress’s failure to pass climate change legislation reveals, there is little political support for centralization through federal legislation. Instead, this Part is my initial foray into the theory of land law federalism.

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148 See Petersburg Cellular P’ship v. Bd. of Supervisors, 205 F.3d 688, 703–04 (4th Cir. 2000) (per curiam) (characterizing the Telecommunications Act as presenting the states with a choice between regulating cell-phone-tower siting in accordance with federal standards or ceasing all regulation of cell-phone-tower siting); see also FERC v. Mississippi, 456 U.S. 742, 766 (1982) (upholding the use of conditional preemption even where Congress “fail[s] to provide an alternative regulatory mechanism to police the area in the event of state default” (emphasis added)).

149 See Gluck, supra note 139, at 565 (summarizing strategic and functional reasons for federal reliance on state implementation of federal programs).

150 Ryan, supra note 139, at 90.

151 See infra notes 44–47.

152 See infra Part III.C.

A. Federal Implementation

1. Federal Permitting Schemes

Federal permitting requirements restrict the development of privately owned property, including wetlands and endangered species habitats. For example, section 404 of the CWA requires landowners to obtain federal permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to discharge dredge and fill materials into “waters of the United States.” The regulations state that “[m]ost wetlands constitute a productive and valuable public resource, the unnecessary alteration or destruction of which should be discouraged as contrary to the public interest.”

Section 9 of the ESA similarly prohibits activities affecting protected species and their habitats, even if privately owned, unless authorized by a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. To obtain a permit under the ESA, landowners and developers must prepare habitat-conservation plans that fully describe proposed land-development activities and demonstrate measures that will mitigate their adverse impact on endangered or threatened species.

Federal permitting schemes are generally effective at preventing undesired development; however, critics argue that single-purpose federal agencies are overly zealous in administering the schemes, restricting even socially beneficial development, and that direct federal regulation intrudes upon...
local autonomy. Unlike locally elected officials, federal administrators are not politically accountable to the local community and therefore have less incentive to take local preferences into consideration. Thus, even where federal programs enable federal regulators to modify uniform rules through case-by-case permitting schemes, as under the CWA and the ESA, “vast geographical and metaphorical distances separate Washington bureaucrats from the local contexts in which land-use decisions are typically made, and where their consequences, at least on the cost side, are most keenly felt.”

2. Federal Siting Regimes

In contrast to federal permitting schemes, which intentionally restrict development, federal siting regimes promote growth by subsidizing the development of specific land uses. Several federal siting regimes preempt the local zoning process and vest siting authority exclusively in a federal administrative agency. For example, the EPAct grants FERC exclusive authority to site LNG terminals. Despite this authority, commentators observe that state and local actors continue to resist LNG siting, using litigation and drawn-out permitting processes to delay or prevent the development of these facilities.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 (NWPA), perhaps the poster child for a failed federal land-use policy, similarly preempts the local zoning process. The NWPA, as amended, charged the Nuclear Regulatory Commission with licensing a single national repository for high-level
radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain, Nevada.\textsuperscript{165} From the outset, the Yucca Mountain project faced intense state and local opposition.\textsuperscript{166} In 2009, nearly two decades after the site was selected and billions had been spent studying it, the Department of Energy terminated its plans for the Yucca Mountain project.\textsuperscript{167}

Because the sample size is so small, and the targeted land use so unavoidably risky, it is difficult to generalize from the federal experience siting LNG terminals and hazardous-waste facilities to other land-use facilities. It is quite possible that federal administrative agencies have the capacity to site less hazardous facilities more effectively. Nonetheless, in comparison to the alternative local-official-as-federal-agent approach, federal implementation is likely to be more costly and to produce less optimal results. Section B turns to the local-official-as-federal-agent alternative.

B. Local Implementation

1. Conditional Funding

When Congress seeks to encourage a state to legislate in accordance with national interests, it may, under its spending power, condition federal funding upon cooperation with the national program.\textsuperscript{168} Although there is a point at which conditional funding becomes coercive, in \textit{South Dakota v. Dole}, the Supreme Court embraced an expansive understanding of Congress’s spending power, noting that the Spending Clause empowers Congress to impose conditions on the use of federal funds “to further broad policy objectives by conditioning receipt of federal moneys upon compliance by the recipient with federal statutory and administrative directives.”\textsuperscript{169}


\textsuperscript{166} See Marta Adams, \textit{Yucca Mountain—Nevada’s Perspective}, 46 IDAHO L. REV. 423, 438–42 (2010) (describing the controversy in Nevada and the delays caused by scientific and environmental studies, and judicial and administrative challenges); Kearney, supra note 165, at 60 (describing the contentious siting process at Yucca Mountain).

\textsuperscript{167} Ostrow, supra note 2, at 310–12.

\textsuperscript{168} New York v. United States, 505 U.S. 144, 166–68 (1992); Hills, supra note 145, at 184.

Conditional funding does not commandeer state officials because states can opt out of the funding program and refuse to follow federal directives. Professor Buzbee explains that, “[w]hen a variety of targeted grants or subsidies are available or vulnerable to loss, states and local governments can seek the particular array of programmatic supports that best meet a jurisdiction’s interests.”\\footnote{Buzbee, supra note 73, at 108.} Importantly, while conditional spending seeks to guide state and local decision making, the decision-making authority itself remains in the hands of local regulators. Thus, conditional spending schemes leave state and local governments with significantly more discretion than would be the case if the federal government regulated land directly.

Federal grants and spending programs have been used to promote local development in accordance with national environmental, economic, and welfare policy goals. For example, federal transportation policies require state and local officials to engage in land-use planning as a condition to receipt of federal highway funds.\\footnote{See 23 U.S.C. § 134(i)(4)(A) (2006) (requiring metropolitan-planning organizations to consult with state and local land-use agencies to develop long-range transportation plans). As Professor John Nolon has observed, “The enigma embodied in this requirement is easily described: it requires regional transportation agencies to achieve consistency with land use plans that are predominantly local in nature and not consistent with one another at the regional level.” Nolon, supra note 4, at 368 n.14.} The Clean Air Act similarly conditions federal highway funds upon states’ adoption of air-pollution-control plans that meet federal requirements.\\footnote{Clean Air Act Amendments of 1977 sec. 129(b), § 176(c)(1), 42 U.S.C. § 7506(c)(1); see also Adler, Judicial Federalism, supra note 37, at 436–37 (noting that the tenuous connection between highway funds and the Clean Air Act makes this provision vulnerable to federalism challenges under the Spending Clause).} The CWA provides states with federal funds to encourage local land-use planning to prevent nonpoint-source pollution,\\footnote{Clean Water Act § 317(c), 33 U.S.C. § 1281(g)(1).} while the Coastal Barrier Resources Act denies aid for developments in sensitive coastal areas.\\footnote{Coastal Barrier Resources Act § 2(b), 16 U.S.C. § 3501(b).}

In addition, several federal programs bypass the states and channel funds directly to local political units. The federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century provides regional transportation-planning agencies with the authority to fund projects that reduce traffic congestion, to acquire scenic easements, and to create bicycle trails.\\footnote{Pub. L. No. 105-178, 112 Stat. 107 (1998) (codified as amended in scattered sections of 23 U.S.C.).} Federal housing programs provide substantial subsidies to special local government agencies, called housing...
authorities, to enable these authorities to develop and manage housing projects with below-market rent.176

Although the early federal housing projects had mixed results,177 subsequent federal policies aimed at developing mixed-income communities178 and included funding for the development of regional and local land-use plans.179 Federal funding for regional land-use planning declined in the 1980s180 but was revived in 2009 with the formation of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, an interagency partnership between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the EPA.181 The Partnership coordinates a host of discretionary grant programs,182 including the Sustainable Communities Initiative, which supports “regional planning efforts that integrate housing and transportation decisions, and increase the capacity of communities to modernize land use and zoning plans.”183

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177 See Ellickson, supra note 176, at 989–95; Green, supra note 9, at 91–92.
178 For example, the section 8 voucher program was designed to allow low-income families to obtain housing on the open market. United States Housing Act of 1937 § 8, 42 U.S.C. § 1437f. HOPE VI aimed at inducing local housing authorities to replace failed public-housing projects with mixed-income developments, see Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1993, Pub. L. No. 102-389, tit. II, 106 Stat. 1571, 1579 (1992), and recent legislation required local housing authorities to rent more public-housing units to households whose incomes were not extremely low, see Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-276, § 513(a), 112 Stat. 2461, 2544–45 (codified at 42 U.S.C. § 1437n(a)(3)).
180 Id. at 26.
181 The Partnership defines “sustainable communities” as “places that have a variety of housing and transportation choices, with destinations close to home.” SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES, PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES, http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/ (last visited Aug. 22, 2012).
Another interesting example of conditional funding is in the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (CZMA). Unlike other environmental laws that threaten noncompliant states with federal preemption, the CZMA is entirely voluntary. The CZMA provides states with two sets of incentives to encourage them to develop comprehensive coastal-management programs that meet federal approval standards: (a) federal funding and (b) regulatory authority over their coastal zones, including the authority to ensure that federal projects are consistent with the states’ plans. The CZMA recognizes the traditional role that local officials play in administering land-use regulations and requires states to create a regulatory framework that assures “the full participation of those local governments and agencies” in implementing the Act. Moreover, the federal standards are broadly drawn, leaving states with substantial discretion to tailor the particular coastal-protection measures they adopt. Although weaknesses in the evaluation process have made it difficult to assess the CZMA’s effectiveness, nearly every coastal state has adopted a plan in compliance with federal standards.

2. Conditional Preemption

In addition to the carrot of federal funding, federal land laws often include the stick of conditional preemption. Conditional preemption requires the

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185 See Buzbee, supra note 73, at 110 (citing 16 U.S.C. § 1455(d)(1)).
186 Ryan, supra note 139, at 59–60; see also 136 CONG. REC. 26,030, 26,030–67 (1990) (statement of Rep. Walter B. Jones); Buzbee, supra note 73, at 111 (noting that the CZMA provides regulatory and financial “incentives to direct development in ways avoiding environmental harms, yet without requiring any federal displacement of local choices”).
190 See Ryan, supra note 139, at 59 (“Thirty-four of thirty-five eligible states have approved coastal-management plans, and Illinois, the remaining state, is presently composing a plan.”); see also OFFICE OF OCEAN & COASTAL RES. MGMT., U.S. DEP’T OF COMMERCE, UPDATE ON COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEM, at ii (2006), available at http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/resources/docs/npmsupdate.pdf.
191 See Hills, supra note 145, at 184; Hills, supra note 24, at 867 (“[P]rograms for conditional preemption resemble programs for project grants; rather than presenting every state with the same package of conditions and benefits, Congress establishes a set of criteria that each state might be able to meet in a different manner by individually applying to a Federal agency for approval of its implementation plan.”); Philip J. Weiser,
states to cooperate in implementing the federal program or be preempted by
the federal government. In New York v. United States, the Supreme Court
held that the Tenth Amendment prohibits Congress from imposing some
affirmative duties on nonfederal officials. At the same time, however, the
Court maintained that, so long as Congress is authorized under the Commerce
Clause to preempt state regulation entirely, it may require states to choose
between regulating in accordance with federal standards and having their
nonconforming regulations preempted by federal law.

The consequences of refusing to implement the cooperative program,
however, vary depending on the form of conditional preemption Congress
uses. This section identifies two forms of conditional preemption that appear in
federal land law: the federal-regulation model and the market-alternative
model. The federal-regulation model of conditional preemption presents states
with the following choice: regulate in accordance with federal standards or the
federal government will regulate directly. In contrast, the market-alternative
model tells states: regulate in accordance with federal standards or do not
regulate at all. Congress does not threaten to replace local officials with federal
agents. Instead, Congress threatens to leave the field unregulated.

The federal-regulation model appears in Hodel v. Virginia Surface Mining
& Reclamation Ass’n. In Hodel, the Court upheld a provision of the Surface
Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA) that required mine
operators to restore certain land to its pre-mining condition. In essence, the

that, through conditional preemption, “Congress either allows states to regulate in compliance with federal
standards or preempts state law with federal regulation”).

192 Davis, supra note 118, at 405; Weiser, supra note 191, at 668. See generally New York v. United
States, 505 U.S. 144, 167–68 (1992) (providing examples of conditional preemption, including the CWA, the
Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976, and the

193 See New York, 505 U.S. at 174–75; see also supra note 142.

194 See id. at 173–74.

195 Davis, supra note 118, at 405.

196 See id. at 405–06 & n.12 (identifying proposals for eliminating conditional-preemption schemes that
do not provide an alternative federal regulatory scheme); see also Hills, supra note 24, at 926 (criticizing the
Court’s acceptance of PURPA, which failed to provide a federal regulatory alternative for states that refused to
comply); Jared O’Connor, Note, National League of Cities Rising: How the Telecommunications Act of 1996
the use of conditional preemption in the Telecommunications Act).


199 See Hodel, 452 U.S. at 268.
SMCRA told the states: regulate pursuant to our requirements or we will regulate surface mining ourselves. \(^{200}\) Despite the tradition of localism in land-use law, the Court upheld this use of conditional preemption to invalidate inconsistent state policies. \(^{201}\)

In *FERC v. Mississippi*, decided one year after *Hodel*, the Court upheld the market-alternative model. \(^{202}\) PURPA, which was at issue in *FERC*, required states to consider federal standards for regulating utilities. In contrast to the SMCRA, however, the federal government did not provide alternative federal regulations for states that chose not to comply. The Court acknowledged the dilemma created by this form of conditional preemption, stating:

> We recognize, of course, that the choice put to the States—that of either abandoning regulation of the field altogether or considering the federal standards—may be a difficult one. And that is particularly true when Congress, as is the case here, *has failed to provide an alternative regulatory mechanism to police the area in the event of state default.*

Nevertheless, the Court determined that Congress may require states to choose between regulating in accordance with federal standards or leaving the field unregulated, subject only to the free market. \(^{204}\)

### a. The Federal-Regulation Model

A number of environmental laws utilize the federal-regulation model of conditional preemption to persuade local officials to administer a federal regulatory program. In general, environmental laws restrict or regulate the use of land so as to protect natural resources or reduce pollution. Because the purpose of these statutes is to restrict development, Congress first offers states the opportunity to comply with federal restrictions and then provides alternative federal regulations should states refuse to cooperate. Regardless of which option a state chooses, the federal purpose is accomplished—

\(^{200}\) *See id. at 270–72; see also Adler, Judicial Federalism, supra note 37, at 431 (describing the SMCRA as offering states the alternative of federal regulation if they do not wish to regulate in accordance with the federal scheme).*

\(^{201}\) *See FERC v. Mississippi, 456 U.S. 742, 767 n.30 (1982) (noting that *Hodel* upheld SMCRA’s land-use regulations although *“regulation of land use is perhaps the quintessential state activity”*).*

\(^{202}\) *Id. at 766.*

\(^{203}\) *Petersburg Cellular P’ship v. Bd. of Supervisors, 205 F.3d 688, 715 (4th Cir. 2000) (per curiam) (quoting FERC, 456 U.S. at 766).*

\(^{204}\) *See FERC, 456 U.S. at 766.*
development will be restricted either by states complying with federal requirements or by the federal regulatory alternative.

The Clean Air Act, for example, incentivizes state implementation of federally imposed standards by threatening to replace state plans and local discretion with federal plans.\(^\text{205}\) The Act affords states and local regulators substantial discretion to allocate criteria pollutants, thus enabling local officials to tailor patterns of development, building codes, public transportation, farming practices, and wetland drainage to meet federal pollution-emission standards.\(^\text{206}\) Yet, if a state fails to complete a plan that complies with all requirements of the Act, the federal government may step in and implement a federal plan.\(^\text{207}\) Under either scenario, air pollution will be regulated.

The CWA’s Stormwater Phase II Rule, which regulates the storm-water discharges of small municipalities, provides another example of this form of conditional preemption.\(^\text{208}\) Under the Phase II Rule, municipalities must develop individually tailored storm-water-management programs that meet six minimum federal criteria or submit to a more complex federal permitting process.\(^\text{209}\) The Ninth Circuit sustained the Phase II Rule against a Tenth Amendment challenge because the Phase II Rule gave municipal operators a choice: implement the regulatory program required by the Phase II Rule or become subject to a federal permitting scheme.\(^\text{210}\) Here, too, the national objective is achieved—water pollution is regulated regardless of an individual municipality’s choice.

\(^\text{205}\) See supra notes 48–51.

\(^\text{206}\) See Doremus & Hanemann, supra note 36, at 828.

\(^\text{207}\) Clean Air Act § 110(c), 42 U.S.C § 7410(c) (2006).


\(^\text{209}\) 40 C.F.R. § 122.34. Specifically, the municipal program must contain the following elements: (1) public education and outreach on storm-water impacts, (2) public involvement/participation, (3) illicit-discharge detection and elimination, (4) construction site storm-water-runoff control, (5) post-construction storm-water management in new development and redevelopment, and (6) pollution prevention/good housekeeping for municipal operations. Id.

\(^\text{210}\) See Envtl. Def. Ctr., Inc. v. EPA, 344 F.3d 832, 847 (9th Cir. 2003) (“With the Phase II Rule, EPA gave the operators of small MS4s a choice: either implement the regulatory program spelled out by the Minimum Measures described at 40 C.F.R. § 122.34(b), or pursue the Alternative Permit option and seek a permit under the Phase I Rule as described at 40 C.F.R. § 122.26(d),”).
b. The Market-Alternative Model

In contrast, under the market-alternative model of conditional preemption, local officials must regulate in accordance with federal standards or leave the substantive area unregulated and subject only to the free market. In essence, Congress permits states to regulate the protected land use so long as states comply with the federal standards. If states refuse to comply, Congress is content to leave the area unregulated, assuming that the free market will produce at least as much, and likely more, of the desired land use.

Several federal siting regimes utilize the market-alternative model. Federal siting regimes are designed to promote land use, albeit a particular type of land use. For example, the Telecommunications Siting Policy is expressly designed to streamline the local land-use-permitting process so as to facilitate the rapid deployment of a national telecommunications network.\(^{211}\) To that end, the Telecommunications Siting Policy establishes threshold federal requirements for cell-phone-tower siting.\(^{212}\) State and local land-use regulators must comply with these federal requirements or refrain from regulating the siting of cell phone towers entirely.\(^{213}\) As the Fourth Circuit explained in considering a Tenth Amendment challenge to the Telecommunications Siting Policy, “Because Congress could validly prohibit states from regulating the siting of telecommunications towers, it may constitutionally offer states a choice between (1) being subject to such a prohibition or (2) processing permit applications for communications towers in accordance with [federal standards].”\(^{214}\)

RLUIPA presents localities with a similar option in regulating religious land uses. RLUIPA is intended to protect religious land use in the zoning process.\(^{215}\) RLUIPA, thus, prohibits local governments from “implement[ing] a land use regulation in a manner that imposes a substantial burden on the religious exercise of a person . . . unless the government demonstrates that [the regulation] . . . (A) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and (B) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental

\(^{211}\) See supra Part I.C.2.b.


\(^{213}\) See id. § 332(c)(7)(B)(v) (giving the right to sue to persons adversely affected by an action of a state government that is inconsistent with the statute’s limitations).

\(^{214}\) Petersburg Cellular P’ship v. Bd. of Supervisors, 205 F.3d 688, 715 (4th Cir. 2000) (per curiam).

interest.” Zoning boards must comply with the federal requirements or leave religious land use unregulated.

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Of course, the choice presented to local governments—regulate in accordance with federal standards or abandon zoning—is largely illusory. No local government would choose to entirely relinquish its land-use regulatory authority, even over a limited category of land uses, such as cell phone towers, group homes for the disabled, or churches. Indeed, Judge Niemeyer, the only judge to have determined that the Telecommunications Siting Policy “commandeer[ed]” local officials in violation of the Tenth Amendment, emphasized the coerciveness of this “choice” in light of the importance of land-use regulation to local governments. According to Judge Niemeyer:

To suggest that a local governmental body withdraw from land-use regulation and leave the construction of structures in the community to the whims of the market is nothing short of suggesting that it end its existence in one of its most vital aspects.

. . . If a state, county, or town abandoned its local land-use power to regulate the siting of communications facilities, any number of telecommunications towers and other communications facilities could be erected in the midst of residential neighborhoods, next to schools, or in bucolic natural settings such as in the woods or on top of mountains—areas held in high value by most communities. Abandoning land use power in this way would put at risk the property value of every home in the jurisdiction and create the possibility that aesthetic quality of every area in the jurisdiction would be destroyed.

In contrast to Judge Niemeyer, most courts have concluded that requiring land-use authorities to regulate in accordance with federal standards does not commandeer state officials. Moreover, this Article maintains that, in some

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216 Id. § 2000cc(a)(1).
218 Petersburgh Cellular P’ship, 205 F.3d at 703.
219 See, e.g., Cellular Phone Taskforce v. FCC, 205 F.3d 82 (2d Cir. 2000) (holding that 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(7)(B)(iv) complies with the Tenth Amendment both facially and as applied); New Cingular Wireless
instances, local governments should be “coerced” into considering the broader implications of their local land-use decisions.\textsuperscript{220} To that end, the next Part introduces a local-official-as-federal-agent model that permits the federal government to establish standards that promote the national welfare without sacrificing the many benefits of decentralized governance.\textsuperscript{221}

III. LOCAL OFFICIALS AS FEDERAL AGENTS

Having established a normative and doctrinal justification for the use of federal law to address cumulative land-use problems in Part I and investigated the mechanics of federal land law in Part II, this Part considers the most basic question of federalism; namely, how should land-use regulatory authority be allocated between the national government and its subnational units?\textsuperscript{222}

To answer this question, this Part assesses the comparative regulatory capacity at each level of government—federal, state, and local—to address

\textsuperscript{220} Accord Robert L. Glicksman & Richard E. Levy, \textit{A Collective Action Perspective on Ceiling Preemption by Federal Environmental Regulation: The Case of Global Climate Change}, 102 NW. U. L. REV. 579, 608 (2008) (arguing that ceiling preemption is a proper response to NIMBYism); Thomas W. Merrill, \textit{Preemption in Environmental Law: Formalism, Federalism Theory, and Default Rules, in FEDERAL PREEMPTION: STATES’ POWERS, NATIONAL INTERESTS 166, 176 (Richard A. Epstein & Michael S. Greve eds., 2007) (“NIMBY laws present a classic example of the prisoners’ dilemma: everyone has an incentive to export the costs of an activity [such as a locally undesirable land use], but if everyone pursues this strategy, the benefits associated with the activity are lost to all.”); Ostrow, \textit{supra} note 2, at 324 (noting that, absent a federal policy compelling local decision makers to consider the broader implications of their decisions, they are often unwilling to do so).

\textsuperscript{221} See Ostrow, \textit{supra} note 2, at 324–25.

\textsuperscript{222} See \textit{supra} note 25.
cumulative land-use problems. Local zoning is far too narrow in scope, and local governments lack the legal authority and political and economic incentives to consider the cumulative impact of local decisions and respond accordingly. At the same time, centralized federal agencies lack the detailed knowledge necessary to make context-specific land-use decisions. The very distance that enables the national government to establish general policies in furtherance of national goals prevents the federal government from efficiently and effectively implementing these polices at the local level, where the costs are concentrated.

This Part argues that a local-official-as-federal-agent model of land use law is likely to generate land-use decisions that are consistent with national policy goals but sensitive to the local context. Section A describes the passive role that states have traditionally played in land-use law. Section B illustrates the relative institutional capacity of the federal government to respond to cumulative, multijurisdictional land-use problems. Section C emphasizes the importance of preserving a primary role for local officials in implementing land-use law. Local officials who are part of the community and politically accountable to it are in the best position to make the types of detailed, context-specific decisions that arise in regulating the use of land.

Though localities are, at least initially, created by the state, they are ultimately more than mere agents of the state. Particularly in the context of

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223 "Regulatory capacity is the power to make things happen—by whatever resources or institutional feature enables either side to accomplish an objective that the other cannot do as well." Ryan, supra note 139, at 90.

224 See Hills, supra note 143, at 1206 ("Congress is simply not as well-suited as the states for creating institutions that deliver local public goods to the residents of a state in a politically accountable and cost-effective way."); Selmi, supra note 4, at 616 ("Largely by highlighting its responsiveness to local conditions, local government has retained almost full authority over land use . . . .").

225 See supra note 161.

226 See Dwyer, supra note 19, at 1218 ("Precisely because they are local, and locally accountable, state and local officials bring that knowledge and orientation to implementation and enforcement."); Freyfogle, supra note 5, at 580 ("Sensible land use decisions require knowledge of the land itself, in its many variations. . . . Local people typically know the land better than outsiders."); Keith H. Hirokawa, Property Pieces in Compensation Statutes: Law’s Eulogy for Oregon’s Measure 37, 38 ENVTL. L. 1111, 1142 (2008) (arguing that zoning enables local governments to address issues of local concern and to “create intentional and organized communities”); Ostrow, supra note 2, at 296 ("[L]ocal primacy in this area of law stems from a practical recognition that local governments are institutionally better suited to this task than are higher levels of government.").

227 See Briffault, supra note 4, at 91 (describing local governments as agents of the state and of the local community); Davidson, supra note 26, at 979-80 (describing competing accounts of local governments as agents of the state and as democratically accountable popular governments).
land use, local governments represent local communities. The Supreme Court set the tone in *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.* when it emphasized the municipality’s autonomous political identity separate from the state and from the larger region. When local officials implement federal land-use policies, they act as double agents, serving both the federal government and local community. As federal agents, local officials further national policy goals, but as agents of the community, local officials actively tailor broad national land-use policies to accommodate local geographic and economic conditions and community preferences.

A. The Silent States

Although zoning has traditionally been considered a local endeavor, the legal authority to regulate land derives, in the first instance, from the states’ police power. The states, then, are certainly the most obvious choice for engaging in centralized land-use planning. Yet, there are two reasons to be wary of relying primarily on the states to account for cumulative land-use problems. First, states have always retained broad discretion to modify or reduce local land-use authority but have generally refused to do so. In the 1920s, most state legislatures expressly delegated their land-use regulatory authority to localities through the adoption of zoning enabling acts. In 1971, Fred Bosselman and David Callies declared the start of a “quiet revolution,” in which state governments would reclaim their land-use regulatory authority from localities so as to address extralocal problems that exceeded the capacity of individual local governments. More than forty years later, the anticipated revolution has yet to materialize, and there is little reason to think that the

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228 272 U.S. 365, 389 (1926).
229 See Gerken, supra note 25, at 39–40 (analogizing sub-local officials, such as zoning board members, with servants and arguing that the power of the servant derives in part from serving two masters).
230 See Bronin, supra note 4, at 268 (“With the power to pass laws, which affect each locality, states have the power to reform the land use regulation system in a significant way to effect change on the wide scale, which the evidence suggests is necessary. Yet no state has demonstrated a willingness to change local land use laws to respond to the mounting evidence against conventional construction.”).
231 Griffith, supra note 6, at 523; Ostrow, supra note 2, at 728.
232 BOSSELMAN & CALLIES, supra note 29, at 1.
233 See id. at 3 (“[S]tates . . . are the only existing political entities capable of devising innovative techniques and governmental structures to solve problems . . . beyond the capacity of local governments acting alone.”).
states are poised to supplant local governments as the primary land-use regulators.234

Second, over the next few decades, the vast amount of growth in the United States is predicted to be concentrated within ten megaregions, many of which cross state boundaries.235 Thus, as the next section explains, it is not clear that individual states will have the regulatory capacity to effectively coordinate land use, even if they were inclined to do so.

B. A National Perspective

Where the cumulative impact of local land-use policies generates substantial extralocal social and economic costs, only the federal government has the legal authority and the financial resources to respond at the appropriate scale.236 The federal government’s capacity to compel states to internalize the costs of their activities has historically been a key justification for federal environmental law.237 Indeed, as the challenge of siting nationwide infrastructure demonstrates, it is difficult to address interstate and interlocal spillovers within a decentralized regulatory system.238 In the words of Steven G. Calabresi, “Sometimes variety is not the spice of life; as to some items it may be a downright nuisance and an expensive one at that. National

234 See Bronin, supra note 4, at 232; David L. Callies, The Quiet Revolution Redux: How Selected Local Governments Have Fared, 20 FACE ENVTL. L. REV. 277, 296–97 (2002) (“Local land use controls have not withered away . . . . [N]ot only have traditional land use controls such as zoning and more flexible ‘growth management’ plans and regulations been used, but there is a growing trend toward environmental protection at the local level as well.” (footnotes omitted)); Fischel, supra note 4, § 3, at 5 (“W]ithin a few years even its enthusiasts had conceded that the revolution had gotten so quiet as to be inaudible.” (citation omitted)); Amnon Lehavi, Intergovernmental Liability Rules, 92 VA. L. REV. 929, 935–37 (2006) (describing changes in zoning and concluding that “states still leave the overwhelming majority of land use regulation to general-purpose local governments”); Saxer, supra note 75, at 678 (“Th[e] shift in responsibility from local to state control has not yet occurred as predicted, though some scholars continue to see a trend in growth management programs toward greater state intervention in the local planning and implementation process.”).
236 See Ostrow, supra note 2, at 305–06.
government eliminates these potential deadweight social costs with general gains in social utility as a result.\(^239\)

The relative institutional capacity of the federal government to account for interstate spillovers will likely increase as the scale of metropolitan governance expands to encompass “megapolitan” regions.\(^240\) Professor Nestor Davidson has argued that the growth of these interstate megaregions may trigger an increased federal role in urban governance as these new regions turn toward the federal government to address complex multijurisdictional regulatory problems, such as climate change, urban sprawl, and the bursting of the subprime-mortgage bubble.\(^241\)

In addition, in the siting context, variations in local permitting processes inhibit the growth of nationwide infrastructure. Increased regulatory uniformity encourages the development of capital-intensive infrastructure by reducing compliance costs and creating a more predictable regulatory environment.\(^242\) For regional or national developers, centralized review of permitting applications is often preferable to local jurisdiction. As one energy consultant explained, “State permitting is advantageous to power plant developers because state proceedings are removed from local electoral politics. State permit reviews are never simple and are always costly. . . . Still, a state proceeding offers a degree of time certainty and an atmosphere of fairness often absent at the local level.”\(^243\)

Moreover, the federal government, which is physically and metaphorically removed from local politics and economic constraints, has a far greater

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\(^{241}\) See Nestor M. Davidson, Leaps and Bounds, 108 MICH. L. REV. 957, 969 n.46 (2010) (reviewing GERALD E. FRUG & DAVID J. BARRON, CITY BOUND: HOW STATES STIFLE URBAN INNOVATION (2008)); see also Klass & Wilson, supra note 6 (manuscript at 22) (identifying regulatory mismatch between interstate transmission siting subject to intrastate regulation); Ruhl & Salzman, supra note 62, at 64–65 (identifying climate change, urban sprawl, and the bursting of the subprime-mortgage bubble as “massive problems with dimensions far beyond the capacity of any single agency to manage effectively”).

\(^{242}\) See Esty, supra note 19, at 619; Ostrow, supra note 2, at 307; see also Sovacool, supra note 38, at 421–22.

capacity to enact policies that have substantial redistributive effects. Paul Peterson argues that the lessening of restrictions on the flow of capital and credit at the national level allows for redistributive policies that are not politically viable at the local level.244 Sheryll Cashin similarly argues that “the national legislature possesses several institutional advantages over state legislatures, including a captured tax base and its facility for logrolling arrangements that tend to equalize power between representatives of affluent and poor districts.”245

In contrast, for economic and political reasons, local officials rarely compel their constituents to accept unpopular land-use decisions.246 Local services—schools, police, fire protection, and sanitation, among others—are financed through local taxes, primarily the property tax.247 As a result, state and local officials are exquisitely sensitive to local property values, aiming to attract land uses (and users) that contribute more to the local tax base than they consume in services.248 As Richard Briffault observes, “Contemporary cities, as a rule, do not engage in innovative redistributive programs, not because they lack the legal authority, but rather because they fear that initiating such programs would cause residential and commercial taxpayers to depart.”249

C. Local Tailoring

Given the enormous variability of land, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the federal government to enact uniform, substantive land-use

244 PAUL E. PETERSON, CITY LIMITS 183 (1981).
246 See PETERSON, supra note 244, at 69–70 (stating that central governments are more likely to enact redistributive policies than are local governments). See generally MARK SCHNEIDER, THE COMPETITIVE CITY: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SUBURBIA (1989) (exploring political and economic incentives of suburban governments, focusing on the effect of competition among local governments).
247 See Richard Briffault, The Local Government Boundary Problem in Metropolitan Areas, 48 STAN. L. REV. 1115, 1115, 1129 (1996) (“Local boundaries are central to the raising and spending of local revenue. . . . The principal source of locally-raised revenue for municipalities is the property tax.”); Lehavi, supra note 234, at 948 & n.84 (explaining that local governments finance their expenditures mainly through revenue that is generated by taxes); Serkin, supra note 85, at 1646–47 (arguing that local governments are responsive to homeowners who “pay for local government services through property taxes and receive the benefit of those services in increased property values”).
248 See Briffault, supra note 77, at 408; Hills, supra note 143, at 1217–18.
249 Briffault, supra note 77, at 408; see also Cashin, supra note 245, at 594–95 (observing that the national government has historically “been far more interventionist than have state governments on behalf of both the poor and racial minorities”).
policies. The United States spans a continent and is home to deserts, mountains, plains, and coastal regions. In some areas, land has been intensively developed; in others, land has been preserved in its natural state. Even adjacent parcels of land “can vary dramatically in their topography and soil characteristics, their hydrology and ecology.” As Justice Story explained in requiring specific performance of land contracts:

> The locality, character, vicinage, peculiar soil, or accommodations of the land generally, may give it a peculiar and special value in the eyes of the purchaser; and it cannot be replaced by other land of the same precise value, or having the same precise local conveniences or accommodations; and therefore a compensation in damages would not be adequate relief.

Generally, a landowner will have deliberately accumulated the parcel in its present form—“it can be cropped in line with the family’s resources, it can be divided for inheritance, or it makes aesthetic or economic sense.” Through its use, land obtains a subjective value that cannot be measured solely in monetary terms.

Thus, the substantive content of “good” land-use law can only be determined in the context of its location. Many land-use questions cannot be

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250 See Jonathan H. Adler, Jurisdictional Mismatch in Environmental Federalism, 14 N.Y.U. ENVTL. L.J. 130, 136 (2005) (“The failure to take into account local environmental conditions—let alone local tastes, preferences, and economic conditions—leads to ‘one size fits all’ policies that fit few areas well, if at all.”); Karol Ceplo & Bruce Yandle, Western States and Environmental Federalism: An Examination of Institutional Viability, in ENVIRONMENTAL FEDERALISM 225, 225–26 (Terry L. Anderson & Peter J. Hill eds., 1997) (“There is recognition that homogeneous solutions applied to heterogeneous problems often yield high costs and weak results.”); Karkkainen, supra note 19, at 80 (noting concerns regarding “rigidities and inefficiencies of sweeping, uniform federal controls on land use”); Trisolini, supra note 4, at 740 (“The variation of urban form renders land use inevitably local to a large degree.”).

251 See Dwyer, supra note 19, at 1218; Peñalver, supra note 3, at 828.

252 Fischel, supra note 4, § 8, at 15 (noting the use of satellite imagery to provide evidence regarding the ratio of urbanized land to agricultural land).

253 Peñalver, supra note 3, at 828.

254 2 JOSEPH STORY, COMMENTARIES ON EQUITY JURISPRUDENCE, AS ADMINISTERED IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA § 746, at 51 (Boston, Hilliard, Gray, & Co. 1836) (footnote omitted). As sociologists John Logan and Harvey Molotch put it, “Every parcel of land is unique in the idiosyncratic access it provides to other parcels and uses, and this quality underscores the specialness of property as a commodity.” LOGAN & MOLOTCH, supra note 3, at 23.


256 See Serkin, supra note 85, at 1655–56 (arguing that an account of land that focuses purely on market value misses the subjective value that owners place on the use of the land); see also Joseph William Singer, The Reliance Interest in Property, 40 STAN. L. REV. 611, 663–99 (1988).

257 See RUTHERFORD H. PLATT, LAND USE AND SOCIETY: GEOGRAPHY, LAW, AND PUBLIC POLICY 419 (rev. ed. 2004) (noting that the substance of “good” land-use practices is “informed by the geographical
answered in the abstract. Whether a parcel of land should be developed for residential use or preserved for open space, or whether a church should be sited in a commercial district depends upon the desired city form and socioeconomic makeup of the area. To borrow from Justice Sutherland’s analysis in *Euclid*:

> [T]he question whether the power exists to forbid the erection of a building of a particular kind or for a particular use . . . is to be determined, not by an abstract consideration of the building or of the thing considered apart, but by considering it in connection with the circumstances and the locality.

In contrast to federal bureaucrats, local officials are literally on the ground. Local officials, who are a part of the local community and are politically accountable to it, have the nuanced knowledge and local sensibilities necessary to regulate land. Indeed, John Dwyer similarly concluded in the context of the Clean Air Act:

> The practical need to tailor implementation and enforcement to local conditions requires decision-makers who have, in addition to an adequate knowledge of these conditions, a sympathetic orientation toward local conditions . . . . Precisely because they are local, and locally accountable, state and local officials bring that knowledge and orientation to implementation and enforcement.

Moreover, local implementation preserves traditional federalism values—avoiding the undue concentration of regulatory authority in one level of government; fostering democratic accountability and responsiveness; and leaving ample room for local variation, innovation, and competition. Local context of the physical and socioeconomic systems in which land use operates” (emphasis omitted)); Frieden, * supra* note 255, at 141 (“Although some land is undifferentiated and standardized, the value of most land is highly specific to its location, owner, and its current use.”); Hirokawa, * supra* note 226, at 1142 (“[T]he propriety of particular land uses is governed by their locational context . . . .”).


261 See *supra* notes 227–29 and accompanying text.

262 Dwyer, * supra* note 19, at 1218.

263 In the familiar words of the Court, federalism assures a decentralized government that will be more sensitive to the diverse needs of a heterogeneous society; it increases opportunity for citizen involvement in democratic processes; it allows for more innovation and experimentation in government; and it makes government more responsive by putting the States in competition for a mobile citizenry.
zoning boards are easily accessible and exquisitely responsive to the preferences of local residents. Local units, especially those charged with land-use control, exhibit the traits most closely identified with political participation: they are small, yet powerful. Local zoning proceedings often feature high rates of local participation and provide a robust forum for participatory democracy, allowing democratic communities to develop their character and pursue common goals.

Citizen participation in policy making, in turn, promotes local tailoring and experimentation. Local implementation enables local regulators to experiment with novel implementation techniques with the expectation that optimal regulatory strategies will vary by locale. Local governments learn from each other and from the national government. The national government is able to build upon the best practices of its constituent units but avoid locking in a suboptimal regulatory standard. In this way, the local-official-as-federal-

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264 See Serkin, supra note 85, at 1649–50 (noting that “actual participation in local decisionmaking is relatively easy” and that property owners have both the incentive and political power to influence zoning decisions).

265 See Briffault, supra note 247, at 1123–24 (“[S]maller political units enhance the benefits of participation by increasing the likelihood that a citizen’s ‘action will make a significant difference in the outcome . . .’” (quoting ROBERT A. DAHL & EDWARD R. TUFTE, SIZE AND DEMOCRACY 41 (1973))); Gerald E. Frug, The City as a Legal Concept, 93 HARV. L. REV. 1057, 1069–70 (1980) (noting first that “limited size appears to be a prerequisite to individual participation in political life” and second that “[n]o one is likely to participate in the decisionmaking of an entity of any size unless that participation will make a difference in his life”).

266 See Ostrow, supra note 2, at 297; see also Hirokawa, supra note 73, at 773 (“Through zoning and planning, local governments have engaged in a self-identification process and implemented community visions in the process of designing communities.”).


268 Schapiro, supra note 25, at 293; see also Buzbee, supra note 19, at 108 (noting that there are benefits of regulatory overlap and cooperative-federalism structures); Engel, supra note 19, at 187 (arguing that the static allocation of regulatory authority to either the state or federal government obstructs good environmental management and that broadly overlapping state and federal regulatory jurisdiction is needed).
agent model effectively balances national land-use priorities and local land-use concerns.

CONCLUSION

Though land is local, land *use* is not. In the aggregate, local land use generates harms that far exceed the remedial capacity of local governments. While other formerly local areas have since been subsumed by the states or the federal government, land-use law has retained much of its local character. Nonetheless, modern land-use law involves a significant, though undertheorized, national dimension. In the absence of a national land-use policy, scholars have studied individual federal laws that impact the development of privately owned land in isolation, describing an uncoordinated federal statutory patchwork.

This Article brings order to the federal patchwork, developing a coherent national account of land-use law. This account supplements the traditional localist account by (a) demonstrating that federal law can (and sometimes should) be used to account for the cumulative effects of local land-use decisions on interstate commerce, (b) constructing a theoretical framework through which to analyze the existing body of federal land law, and (c) using insights of federalism theory to identify the benefits of a local-official-as-federal-agent model of land-use law. In allocating authority to both national and local regulators, this model quite consciously accounts for the unique duality of land.